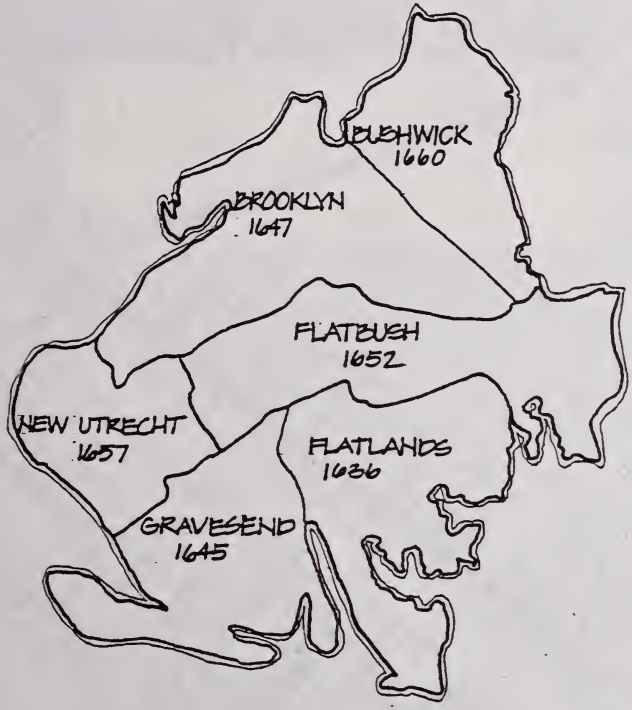
BROOKLYN SURVEY

BUSHWICK AVENUE

PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT



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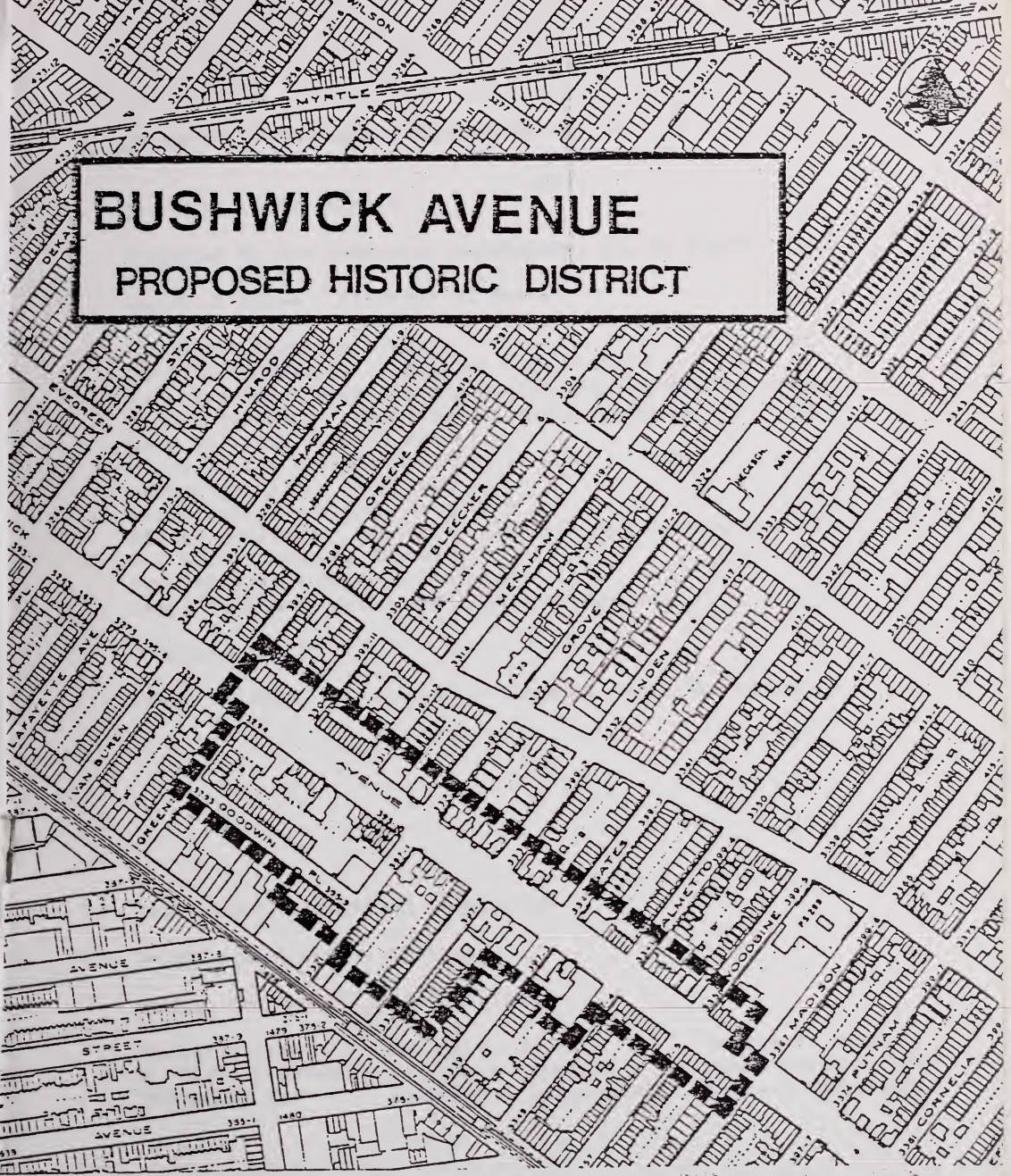

TENTATIVE BOUNDARY LINE
(Subject to Revision)

boundary map

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BUSHWICK AVENUE REPORT

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BUSHWICK AVENUE - GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Bushwick Avenue study area is a distinctive residential section of row houses and freestanding mansions located in the southwest quadrant of the community of Bushwick. Situated in northeastern Brooklyn adjacent to the Queens border, all of Bushwick falls within Community Board # 4.

The boundaries for the entire Bushwick neighborhood are Flushing Avenue to the north, Cemetery of the Evergreens and Conway Street to the south, the Brooklyn-Queens line to the east, and Broadway to the west. Within these borders are the Bushwick North-Ridgewood and Bushwick South study areas, in addition to the Bushwick Avenue district reported on here.

The Bushwick Avenue district examined by the Community Development staff of the Landmarks Preservation Commission includes the section of Bushwick Avenue running from Myrtle Avenue on the north to Covert Street at the southern end. Within this 26-block stretch the survey team found especially significant architecture from Greene Avenue on the north to Madison Street on the south. This eight-block section of Bushwick Avenue forms the spine of the study area. There are western extensions off Bushwick Avenue to include major por-

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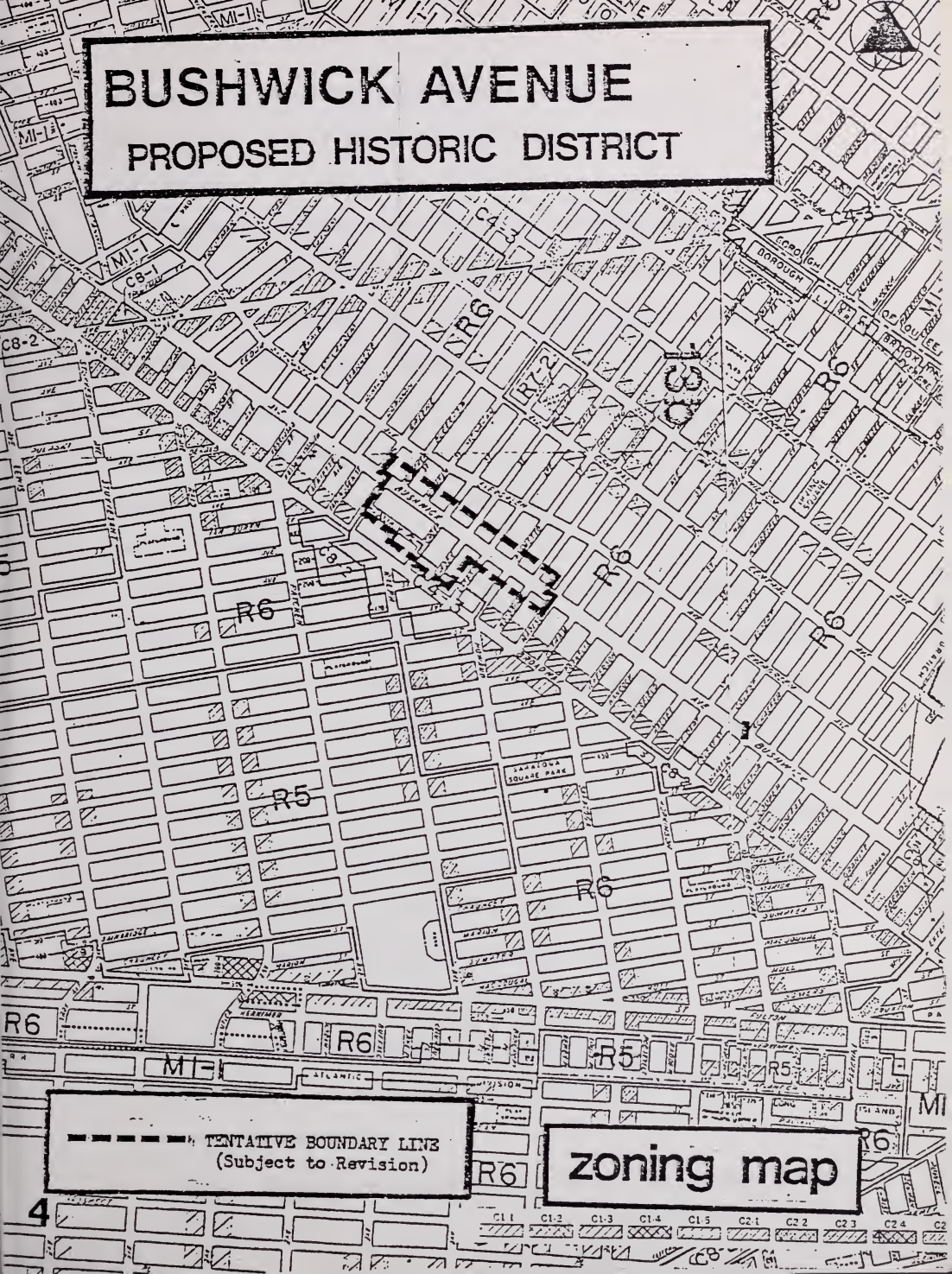
BUSHWICK AVENUE
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT
CEMETERY
BUSHWICK PARK
BROOKLYN
QUEENS
UNION FIELD
EVERGREENS
THE
TRINITY CEMETERY
BOROUGH OF QUEENS
CEMETERY
HIGHLAND
TENTATIVE BOUNDARY LINE
(Subject to Revision)
boundary map
2

tions of Goodwin Place (east and west sides), Grove and Linden Streets (north and south sides) between Bushwick Avenue and Broadway, and the south side of Greene Avenue between Bushwick Avenue and Goodwin Place. More precise lines--which are subject to revision--are shown on the accompanying boundary map.

Zoning for the area is R6 with commercial overlays. Broadway, lying immediately to the west of the district, is zoned C4-3 from Greene Avenue to Palmetto Street and C1-3 from Palmetto Street to Madison Street.

There are three distinct population divisions in Bushwick, a neighborhood where people of Italian and German descent once predominated. The northeastern section bordering Queens remains Italian with some Eastern Europeans. The northwest section bordered by Broadway is largely Hispanic. The rest of the area south of Myrtle Avenue--including the Bushwick Avenue study area--is mixed black and Hispanic with the Hispanic population growing. A few elderly whites remain in this latter area.

There are a number of active groups in Bushwick. The Bushwick Community Corporation was formed to bring the various ethnic groups together, but its effectiveness has been hampered by political squabbling for control. The Bushwick Restoration Council, a private umbrella group of community organizations, has worked actively to bring about


BUSHWICK AVENUE
PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT
TENTATIVE BOUNDARY LINE
(Subject to Revision)
zoning map
R6
R5
M1-1
C8-1
C8-2
C4-3
R7-2
BROADWAY
SARATOGA SQUARE PARK
ATLANTIC
4

private housing rehabilitation and to get CD monies for this purpose. This group is headed by a local clergyman and has other active clergy among its membership.

The major problems of this area are high unemployment, welfare, and many elderly people living on fixed incomes. There is a high crime rate fed by unemployment, alcoholism, and drugs. Youth gangs frequently rob and vandalize stores along Broadway. There are many disturbed families with a high incidence of child abuse. Health, decent housing and a stable means of making a living are unmet needs for many residents.

The Bushwick Avenue study area cannot be regarded as a community entity. There are no block associations along the avenue, and the wide street with its concomitant heavy traffic does not lend itself readily toward feelings of cohesiveness or community spirit.

Many of the large, turn-of-the-century family residences along the avenue have been illegally converted to rooming houses. According to interviews with the Bushwick Neighborhood Preservation Office, city agencies are aware of this use, but they feel that as long as no blatantly life-threatening violations are involved, it is preferable to keep the buildings occupied since stricter code enforcement would accelerate abandonment.

One of the corner apartment buildings, 1041 Gates Avenue,

978 Bushwick Avenue

was abandoned by its owner about eight months ago. Although the Bushwick Restoration Council tried to organize the tenants and maintain the building, its efforts were unsuccessful. The Bronx-based Institute for Puerto Rican Urban Studies has become interested in the property and is negotiating to buy the mortgage.

The frame buildings at 46-62 Goodwin Place have been poorly maintained by the owner. The Neighborhood Preservation Office expressed the opinion that should the buildings have any major maintenance problems, the owner might well choose to abandon those buildings.

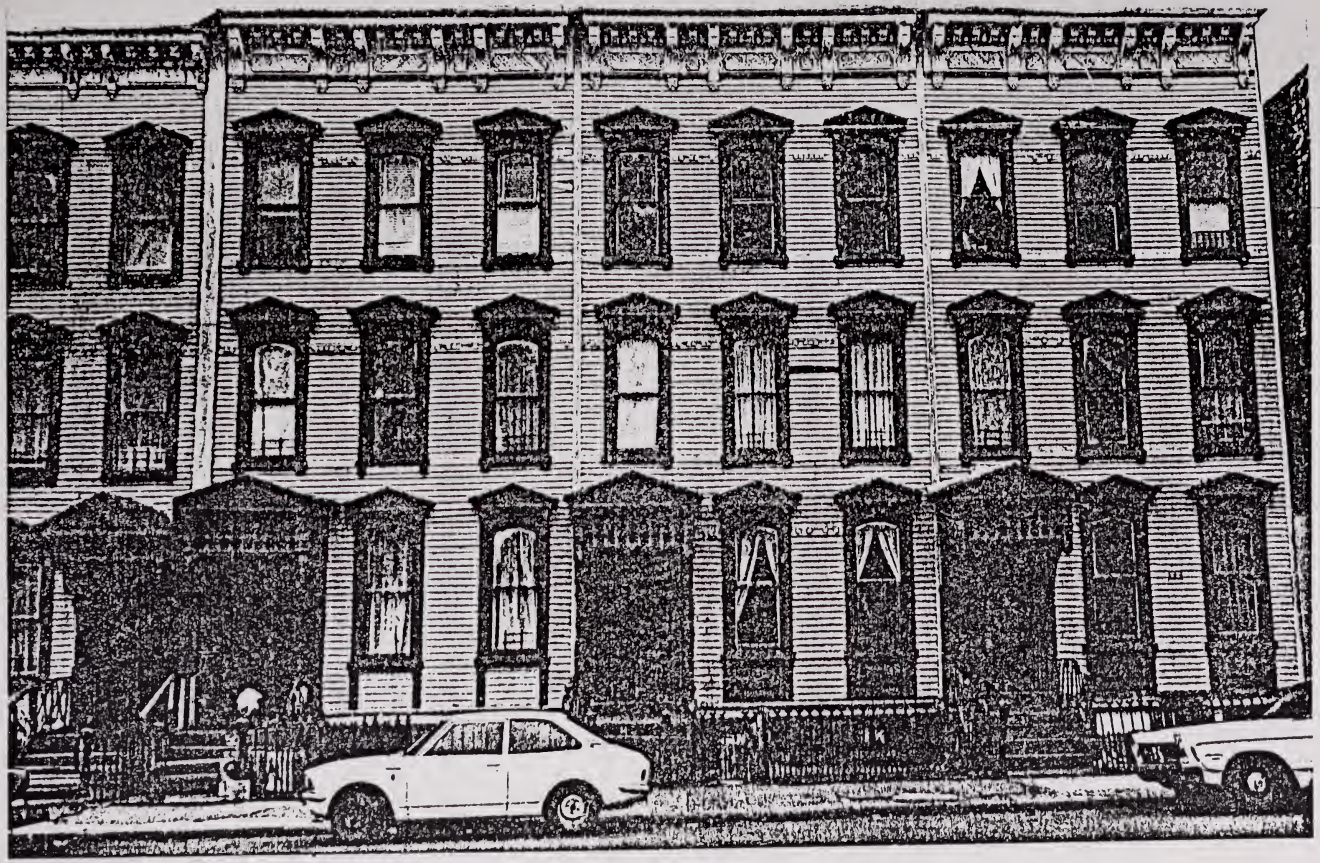
Given the critical problems of the larger Bushwick community, designation is probably not a major concern in any of the three specific areas reviewed by the survey team. There is a marked interest however in community preservation as evidenced by the various groups working on housing problems. These groups have coordinated well with the Bushwick Office of Neighborhood Preservation. Community meetings and contacts with active members of the various organizations would be necessary to sound out the residents as to their attitudes toward designation.

BUSHWICK AVENUE - HISTORY

Early Bushwick was a large area in northern Brooklyn that originally included both present-day Williamsburg and present-day Bushwick. The Dutch Governor, William Kieft, purchased this parcel of land from the Carnarsie Indians in 1638. At first farmers scattered themselves over the entire area and made no attempt to establish a regular settlement. However, in 1660 Peter Stuyvesant urged them to group together as a defense against possible Indian attack.

One group gathered on a high point of land near the East River in what is now Williamsburg. A second group consisting of fourteen Frenchmen and a few others located in a more remote area further inland that came to be known as Bushwick Village. The site of the village (between Bushwick Creek, which is now filled in, and Newton Creek) was selected by Peter Stuyvesant in response to the group's request on February 16, 1660 for a grant of land. The event is described as follows:

> February 19th, the Director-General, with the Fiscal, Nicasius de Sille and his Honor Secretary Van Ruyven with the sworn surveyor, Jaques Corteleau,...have fixed upon a place between Mispat kill (Newton Creek) and



46-50 Goodwin Place

> Norman's kill (Bushwick Creek), to establish a village; and have laid out, by survey, twenty-two house lots, on which dwelling-houses are to be built.

When Peter Stuyvesant returned to visit the new settlement approximately a year later, he was asked by the residents to give it a name. Because the area was covered with forest, he called it Boswijck meaning "heavy woods". The English form of this original name became Bushwick. To protect themselves from Indian attack the residents enclosed their village with a stockade of pointed logs. Among the earliest public structures built were a town hall and a church. The church, an octagonal-shaped structure, was located at the intersection of present-day Conselyea Street and Bushwick Avenue. Although members of other religious denominations eventually moved to the community, the first settlers were members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The land where present-day Bushwick is located was originally known as New Bushwick Lotts. A wooded area lying to the south of Bushwick Village, it was given to the village residents by Peter Stuyvesant for use as grazing land for their cattle and a source of firewood. A road known as the New Bushwick Lane--roughly paralleling present-day Bushwick Avenue--led from the village to the woodland. At first all the land was held in common by the villagers. Later,

41 Linden Street

around 1700, the land was divided and the first house was built by a William Janse Van Nuyse.

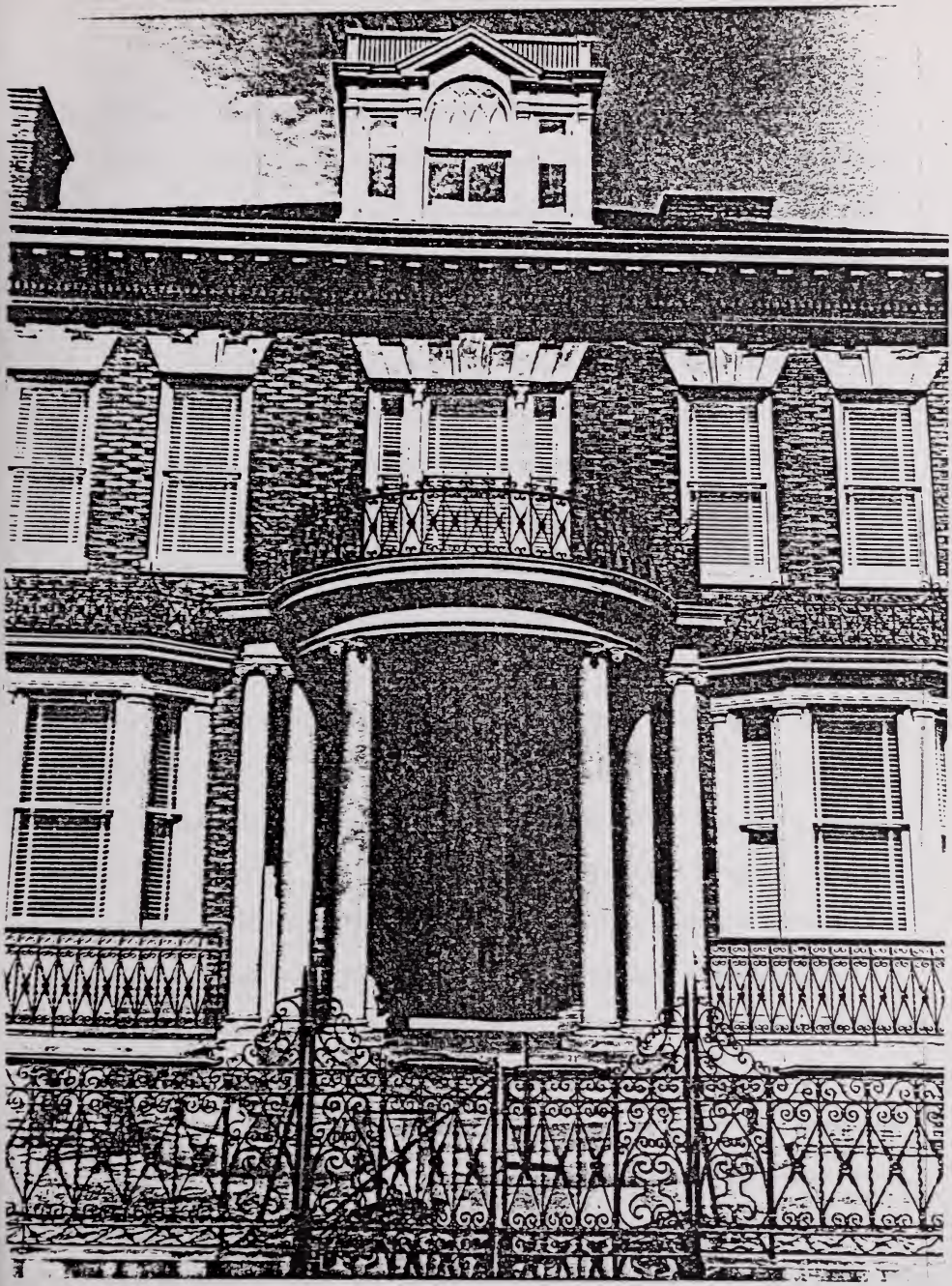
A large parcel consisting of a house, three lots and a part of another lot in the New Bushwick Lotts area was sold to Leffert Lefferts in 1724 for £ 438. In 1728, he purchased two more lots adjoining his own land from a neighbor named Auke Rynerse. In 1753 the Lefferts property was again enlarged by a 27-acre purchase also adjoining the Lefferts farm. The former owners were Johannes Durjee and Abraham Schenck.

When Leffert Lefferts died in 1754, his son inherited the 136-acre farm as well as about 25 acres of woodland in the town of Newton and some meadows. In 1768 this property was sold to Jacob Suydam who settled on the former Lefferts' farm and lived there until his death in 1811.

The Lefferts homestead remained intact until 1869 when Adrian Martense Suydam, Jacob Suydam's grandson, decided to break up the farmland for development. According to Stiles:

> Mr. Suydam, wishing to induce settlement in his neighborhood with a view to developing that section of the city, gave a man a lot on condition that he would at once erect and occupy a dwelling thereon; and, since then, his policy has been so liberal that, at the present time, there are no less than one hundred and twenty-five residences within the borders of the old homestead....

With the increased development of the New Bushwick Lotts area into farms and residences another Dutch Reformed Church



1019 Bushwick Avenue

called the South Bushwick Reformed Church was built. This church, which is a designated New York City landmark, stands in a small park at the intersection of Bushwick Avenue and Himrod Street, two blocks from the northern border of the study area. The land was donated by two of the first parishoners, Abraham and Andrew Stockholm. Families from twenty neighboring farms made up the original congregation.

Study of early maps shows that several large farms and scattered frame dwellings covered the Bushwick Avenue study area before it was developed in the late nineteenth century. Margaret Duryea, William Covert and William H. Furman were local farm owners. The northern boundary of the large Suydam farm was located within the study area at Palmetto Street.

The quiet, rural character of Bushwick began to change in the 1850's. In 1852 the farm of William Bowron, located on New Bushwick Lane between Menahan and Madison Streets, was laid out into building lots and called Bowronville. Within this tract land just south of Menahan Street was used as a picnic grove, giving Grove Street its current name. There were a few houses along the west side of New Bushwick Lane at this time, but they were entered from Broadway due to the unimproved state of the Lane. Between 1860 and 1865 New Bushwick Lane was straightened to assume its present form from Flushing Avenue east to the Cemetery of the Evergreens.

This new road soon took the name Bushwick Avenue. In 1854 both Bushwick and nearby Williamsburg became part of the city of Brooklyn. During these years there was an influx of German immigrants, resulting in increased residential construction and also the development of a local brewery industry.

Bushwick had the natural resources necessary for brewery sites: i.e., an abundant water supply, soil adaptable for construction of aging cellars, and convenient water (and later rail) transportation for raw materials. Before refrigeration techniques were perfected, the German immigrant community provided a local market for the product. To encourage consumption, breweries opened beer gardens and restaurants throughout the area with free meals for patrons. Americans of other nationalities soon acquired a taste for German "lager" beer and enjoyed socializing in the gardens. The prosperous brewers built imposing mansions along Bushwick Avenue, making the Avenue a popular place for Sunday promenades.

This thriving industry was abruptly halted by the Prohibition Act of 1919. After the Act was repealed, only a small number of neighborhood breweries reopened. As growing nationwide companies took over more and more of the market, the industry gradually moved elsewhere and today no operating breweries remain in Brooklyn.

46 Goodwin Place

As late as 1883 there was still a good deal of open land south of Flushing Avenue. A second development which brought many families to Bushwick was the opening in 1888 of the elevated line connecting Bushwick with Manhattan. At this time a building boom set in with people from overcrowded Manhattan tenements eager to occupy the two-family and small multiple-family dwellings that spread over the area. The earlier German immigrants were gradually joined by Italians during this period.

An examination of building department records reveals that most architecturally significant buildings in the Bushwick Avenue study area date from the years between 1880 and 1915. It was during this period that the pleasant residential mix of row and freestanding houses took shape. Unlike many areas of Brooklyn, Bushwick Avenue was not built up by any one developer in particular; moreover, the only architect whose name appears with any frequency in building department records is Theobald Engelhardt, one of Brooklyn's most prolific architects. Born on August 23, 1851 in Brooklyn, Engelhardt graduated from Broron's Business College and the Cooper Institute. He worked for a banking firm in New York and later worked for his father, a carpenter. He established his first office at 14 Fayette Street in 1877 and in 1885 moved into a four-story commercial building of his own design still standing at 906 Broadway.

1075-83 Bushwick Avenue

Although the majority of Engelhardt's commissions came from local Bushwick clients, he also designed commercial and residential structures in Greenpoint, Williamsburg and Manhattan. He was connected with the construction of new facilities for at least ten breweries, including all structures in the expansion of the L. Liebmann's Sons Brewery. In the Bushwick Avenue area Engelhardt is associated with the design of ten brewers' mansions as well as several rows of middle and lower-middle class housing.

Bushwick retained its middle-class flavor until population shifts after World War II brought poor black and Puerto Rican families into the area. Many of the district's Italian and German families moved to Queens, other parts of Brooklyn, or to the suburbs, although a small Italian area remains between Knickerbocker Avenue and the Queens line. Much of the housing in Bushwick as a whole is deteriorated, and many structures are tinned or abandoned. Housing within the study area, while rarely abandoned, is often only marginally maintained and is threatened by the large blighted areas to the east along Central, Wilson and Evergreen Avenues. Although some community groups are working with the city to stop this pattern of decline, no significant reversal has yet occurred.

BUSHWICK AVENUE - ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Bushwick Avenue district is basically an area of row houses interspersed with impressive freestanding mansions built by the owners of the breweries to the north in adjacent areas of Bushwick. Development occurred primarily in the period from 1880 to 1910, spurred on by the completion in 1888 of the elevated line linking Bushwick with Manhattan. The bulk of the district's row housing, populated first by German and later by Italian immigrants, was constructed in the 1880's. The brewers' mansions that line this section of Bushwick Avenue came slightly later with construction dates ranging from the late 1880's to around 1915.

Row housing in the Bushwick Avenue area is primarily Italianate or neo-Grec, ranging in height from two stories with basement to three and four story examples at the southern end of the district. They are usually set back from the street and have small front yards surrounded by iron fences. Done in either brick or stone, these are relatively modest rows that reflect the middle and lower middle-class nature of the original inhabitants, most of whom came from overcrowded tenements in Manhattan. A characteristic

43-47 Linden Street

example of the type is Nos. 945-965 Bushwick Avenue, a row of eleven brownstone residences constructed in 1885 and designed by John E. Dwyer, a local Bushwick architect. Each house in this group sports a prominent cornice with modillions supported by six incised brackets over a molded fascia. Door and window lintels project out over small brackets and are sharply incised in a neo-Grec foliate pattern. This row is particularly distinguished by the high stoops--all of which are intact--and the large amount of extant cast iron used for railings, fences, and gates. Of some historical interest is No. 959, once the residence of John F. Hylan, mayor of New York from 1918 to 1925.

The row of ten houses at Nos. 37-53 Linden Street and 1020 Bushwick Avenue represents one of the finest groupings of its type in the city. Designed with facades of red brick with stone and terra cotta trim, these striking residences are free adaptations of Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles. On each house along Linden Street an L-shaped stone stoop with original iron railings rises over a basement of stone rock-cut with margins. Basement fenestration features curved window edges and tongue and dart molding just under the lintels. Double doors on the first floor have transoms filled with stained glass worked in foliate patterns that are repeated in the glass infills above the first floor windows. The foliate motif is continued in the terra cotta

1020 Bushwick Avenue

panels under these windows, and most impressively, in the band of stylized relief ornamentation separating the first and second floors. Round arched windows on the upper floor are set off by another band of terra cotta decoration, while the imaginative cornice treatment features alternating panels of swag and geometric patterning. The corner unit at 1020 Bushwick Avenue is treated as a separate entity, but it exhibits an architectural vocabulary similar to that of the nine Linden Street houses. A crested mansard roof with a Queen Anne dormer adorns this residence, while the lines of the corbelled chimneys extend down the length of the facade to form piers along the Bushwick Avenue side.

The row of eight neo-Grec houses at 21-35 Linden Street differs little from the standard type found elsewhere in the Bushwick Avenue vicinity. Across the street, however, is a series of eleven Italianate brownstones (14-34 Linden Street) that break the monotony of the streetscape with their three-sided bay fronts. These well-preserved residences display facades of rough-cut stone and share a common cornice of modillions and dentils over a frieze of swags and wreaths. Original double doors and all decorative ironwork remain intact.

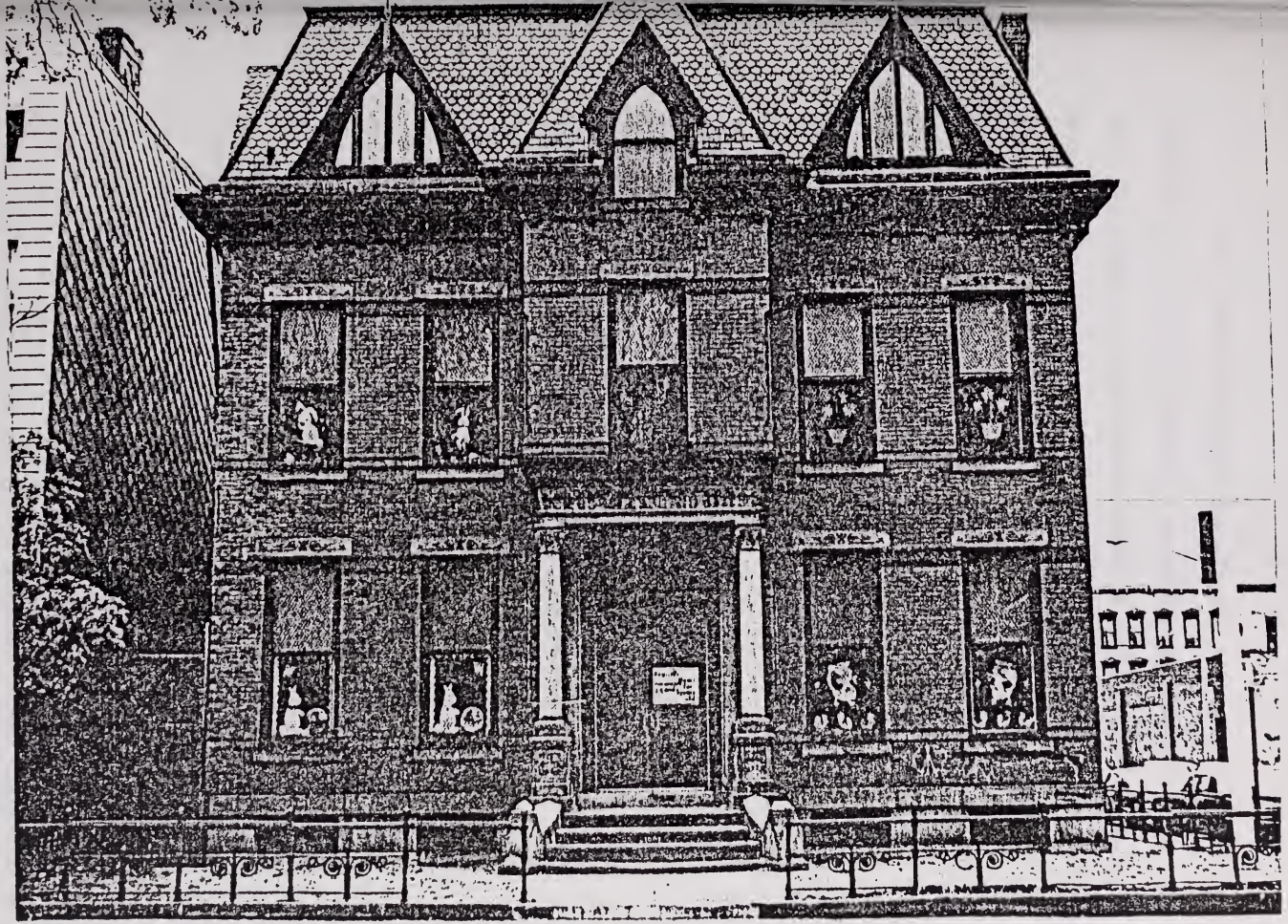
Row housing south of Linden Street continues to be mainly neo-Grec in style with three and four story versions becoming commonplace. These are solid, chaste residences

18-24 Linden Street

with largely unornamented facades of brick or stone. Some incising is to be found on door hoods and cornices, but lintels are often left as simply molded projections.

The west side of Bushwick Avenue from Greene Avenue to Grove Street offers several examples of single-family row housing that can be classified as variations on several Victorian themes. No. 978 Bushwick Avenue, designed by Theobald Engelhardt in 1887, is an instance where French Second Empire, Italianate, and neo-Grec modes are combined to create a picturesque composition. Dormers with triangular pediments are set into a high mansard roof over a bracketed cornice incised in a neo-Grec design. Projecting stone lintels are also incised and sport ears and small brackets. Pilasters support an incised stone lintel over the door, which is framed by a rope molding. The facade, done in brick, is articulated by band courses of stone at sill levels and just below the lintel brackets.

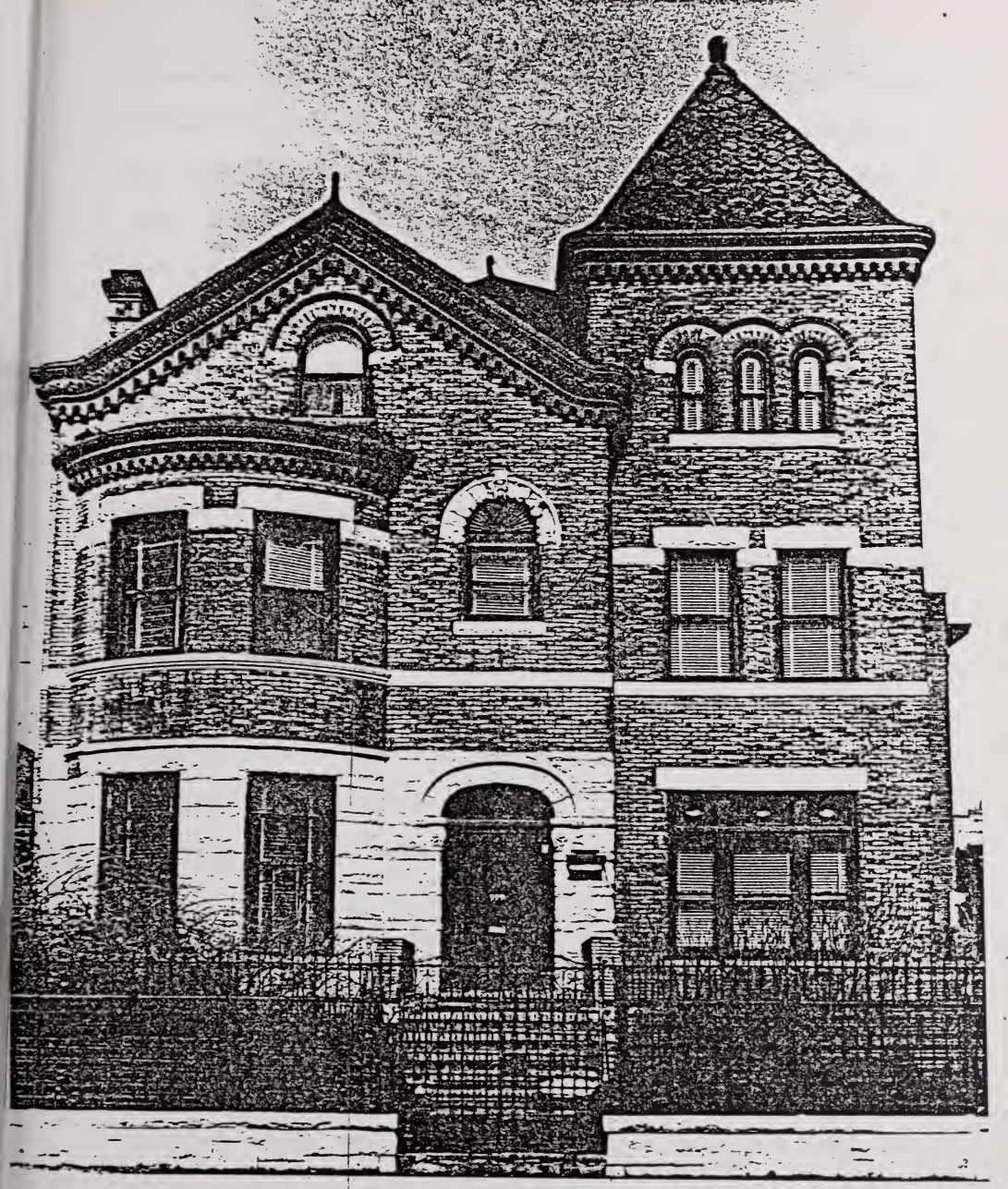
Engelhardt also was responsible for the design of a pair of row houses at 956-958 Bushwick Avenue. Here, the architect enlivened the facades by alternating wide blocks of smooth sandstone with narrow rough-faced courses. Each house boasts an Italianate bracketed cornice, a simply molded first floor cornice, and a projecting entry hood embellished by a cartouche and supported by fluted pilasters.



1002 Bushwick Avenue

At 1002 Bushwick Avenue Engelhardt designed in 1887 a residence for Louis Bossert, a millwork manufacturer who was also the founder of the Hotel Bossert on Montague Street in Brooklyn Heights. This red brick structure exhibits a charming picturesque quality that is heightened by the slate mansard roof with its pointed gables and Gothic-arched windows over a bracketed cornice. The flat stone lintels are incised in a neo-Grec foliate motif while bands of terra cotta relief ornamentation create surface variation on the facade. The elaborately carved door hood is supported by columns with foliate capitals on high bases. The Grove Street facade sports an angular bay window topped by a balustrade. This residence later became the home of the Arion Men's Choir, a leading German singing society of the Eastern District, and it currently houses the Frederick Williams Child Care Center.

The stretch of Bushwick Avenue from Grove Street to Linden Street is marked by five freestanding mansions of various styles and impressive proportions. No. 999 Bushwick Avenue is particularly noteworthy: This house, formerly the Gustave Doerschuck residence, is an asymetrically massed Romanesque Revival structure situated on a low hill and surrounded by high hedges and an iron fence. Its main compositional elements include a gable-roofed central wing with a curved bay projection adjoining a square tower topped by a



999 Bushwick Avenue

pyramidal roof. Handsome details--curved brick corners, round-arched third floor windows with finely molded brick lintels, and rock-faced lintels on the lower floors--enhance the facade, while a bold foliate frieze with corbelling creates a striking outline against the sky. The ground floor of the main wing is done in rock-faced stone; this material is also used to form the elliptical arch of the main door, which is embellished by floral medallions.

The former Charles Lindemann residence at 1001 Bushwick Avenue is a rather uninspired brick and stone mansion that has been marred by the addition of asphalt siding to its upper floor. Also disfigured by asphalt siding but much more successful as a design is the house at 1013 Bushwick Avenue designed by Engelhardt in 1892. With its iron cresting over a dormered mansard roof and unusual cornice that interrupts the roofline as it slopes downward, this frame dwelling exhibits a dignity seldom seen in a residence of this modest size.

The imposing Georgian Revival mansion at 1019 Bushwick Avenue was designed in 1900 by Ulrick Huberty, a local Bushwick architect whose office was at 911 Broadway. A round portico supported by six Ionic columns on plinths and crowned with an iron balustrade embellishes the elliptically arched front doors. Flanking this central composition are two angular bay windows, each with fluted pilasters supporting a freize of dentils and

1019 Bushwick Avenue

fretwork. Second floor windows boast splayed stone lintels with projecting keystones. An overhanging cornice with modillions and dentils rests beneath a hipped roof that sports a Palladian-style dormered window and massive corbelled chimneys. The brickwork on the facade features burnt headers laid in a Flemish bond and rusticated quoins.

A C-shaped section of the study area extends west off Bushwick Avenue to include portions of Grove Street, Greene Avenue, and Goodwin Place. The eleven row houses on the south side of Grove Street, with one exception, have been unsympathetically resided in synthetic materials, sometimes with original neo-Grec lintels or cornices serving as the only indicator of any specific style. In one instance--42 Grove Street--an austerely handsome red brick facade remains; it features incised stone lintels and a corbelled cornice with dentils and saw-tooth brick banding. The ground floor portal configuration--a central entry flanked by a narrow door to the left and window to the right--leads one to believe that this residence was originally a firehouse.

Goodwin Place is a quiet, block-long side street that features a unique row of nine frame tenements (Nos. 46-52). Although an initial inspection of the row suggests that all nine residences were designed by the same architect, a closer look reveals that Nos. 46-50 show slight variations from the others. Indeed, Theobald Engelhardt designed these three

60-62 Goodwin Place

houses in 1887, six years before Ernest Dennis, another local practitioner, completed the remaining six at Nos. 52-62. All nine tenements are sheathed in clapboard and sport wood cornices with incised brackets. Window enframements have neo-Grec incising and are crowned by triangular pediments. The windows on the Engelhardt trio are segmentally arched, while the Dennis buildings have plain rectangular fenestration. Strongly projecting triangular door hoods rest on brackets done in a wagon wheel design that follows a tradition of nineteenth-century wood vernacular architecture.

A long row of two- and three-story frame houses, all of which have been resided, marks the east side of Goodwin Place. At the southeast corner of Goodwin Place and Greene Avenue is a late Victorian frame residence (1090 Greene Avenue) of considerable charm. Three eyebrow windows are set into a stylized neo-Grec cornice. First and second story windows are segmentally arched and have incised wooden enframements with projecting hoods. Columns resting on high bases support a pedimented portico over the double doors. It is alleged that this house originally belonged to the founder of the Bohack supermarket chain. Next door at 1092 Greene Avenue is an equally picturesque frame house that boasts a full-width porch on turned posts under a bracketed wood cornice. Elaborate cap moldings form window lintels, while an Italianate cornice with foliate brackets

1090-1092 Greene Avenue

and modillions crowns the structure.

Two churches--the Bushwick Presbyterian Church of Peace and the Calvary and St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church--lie within the district. Neither, however, is especially significant from an architectural point of view. St. Cyprian's, a red brick edifice completed in 1910, combines vaguely Gothic elements on the main body of the church with a crennellated bell tower. A 1905 Georgian Revival structure done in buff brick and stone, Bushwick Presbyterian sports a high steeple that punctuates the low Bushwick skyline.

Although a good deal of the study area remains architecturally intact, there has been some unsympathetic alteration of certain structures. Specifically, in the case of row housing this alteration has consisted mainly of the removal of front stoops, while the addition of asphalt siding has been the most significant affliction plaguing the architectural integrity of the freestanding residential structures. There have been, moreover, some architectural intrusions in the district, namely the erection of several large, non-descript apartment houses along Bushwick Avenue during the 1920's in addition to an unsightly windowless facility put up by New York Telephone at 1070 Bushwick Avenue in 1971. In the main, however, the area has retained much of its original flavor and a homogeneity that warrants its consideration as an historic district.

BUSHWICK AVENUE - SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES IN AREAS ADJACENT TO THE STUDY AREA

The area along Bushwick Avenue examined in depth by the Community Development staff contains the greatest concentration of noteworthy architecture within the larger Bushwick neighborhood. There are, however, several important structures lying outside the study area, mainly in the vicinity surrounding the intersection of Bushwick and Myrtle Avenues. Because these buildings are in the midst of non-significant architecture, they cannot be considered for inclusion within a district. Rather, they are worthy of possible individual designation.

Individual Buildings

The Vicelius and Ulmer Brewery Building, Beaver Street between Belvidere and Locust Streets

The Ulmer Brewery Office, Beaver Street

Arion Hall, 25 Arion Place

P.S. 24, Beaver Street at Arion Place

The Theobald Engelhardt Office, 905-907 Broadway at Arion Place

St. Mark's Lutheran Church and School, Bushwick Avenue between Jefferson and Troutman Streets

Victorian Gothic residence, 670 Bushwick Avenue

William Ulmer residence, 680 Bushwick Avenue

Italianate residence, 696 Bushwick Avenue

Building Groups

683-701 Bushwick Avenue

688-690 Bushwick Avenue

709-717 Bushwick Avenue

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